

GINGER AND PICKLES



A PLAY FROM THE
STORY

By BEATRIX POTTER

ADAPTED BY

E. HARCOURT WILLIAMS

□□

FIRST PRODUCED

By JEAN STERLING MACKINLAY

AT HER

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS MATINEES

□□

FREDERICK WARNE & Co., Ltd.

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WILLIAMS
TBC (SM.)

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GINGER AND PICKLES

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

From the Story by
BEATRIX POTTER

Adapted by
E. HARCOURT WILLIAMS

CHARACTERS

(in order of their appearance):

The Flannel Policeman.

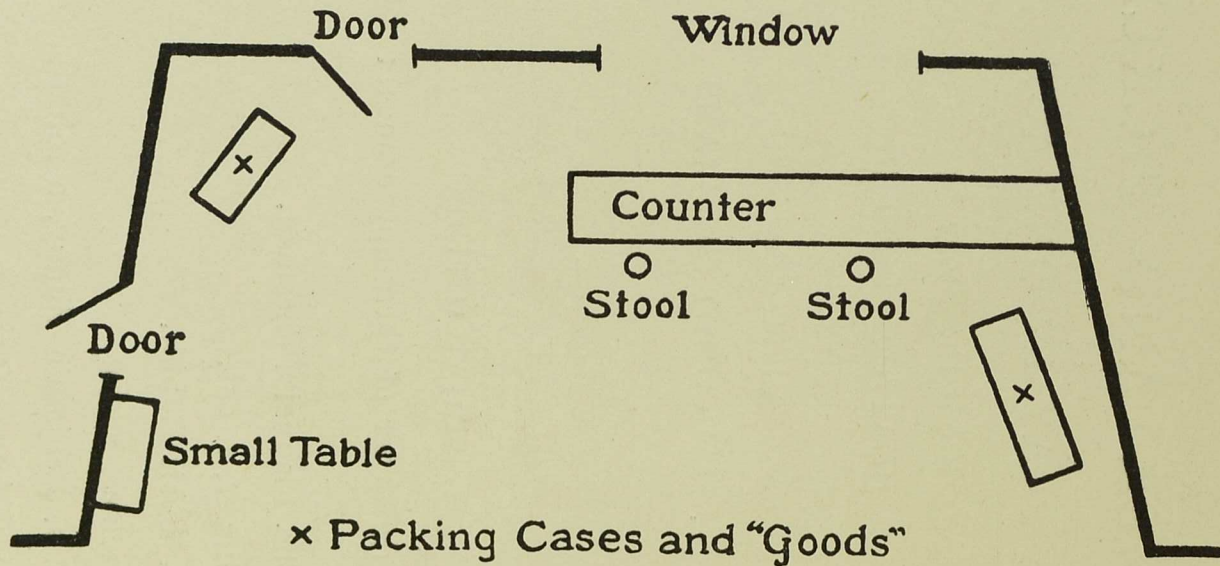
Ginger, a cat.

A small Rabbit.

Pickles, a dog.

Mrs. Benjamin Bunny, a rabbit.

Mrs. Anna Maria, a mouse.



PLAN OF THE STAGE

COSTUMES

The Flannel Policeman.—He should look like a policeman doll, made of blue felt, his face pale, with bead eyes and large ears. He should not be at all alarming.

Ginger.—There are two ways of dressing Ginger : either a complete skin with a sleeveless coat and perhaps an apron, or in complete early Victorian costume with apron. Do not cover the face with a cat mask, but cut one up and use the nose and whiskers, then paint the rest of the face so that the eyes can be used.

Pickles.—Breeches, gaiters, gamekeeper's coat. Cut up a dog mask and use the back of the head and snout which (as with the cat mask) can be held in place by elastic.

Small Rabbit.—A rabbit mask and early Victorian child's costume (either boy or girl).

Mrs. Benjamin Bunny.—Early Victorian dress, poke bonnet, and a rather smart silk shawl.

Mrs. Anna Maria.—The same but not so smart ; Paisley shawl and brown colouring.

SCENE.

Inside the Shop. It should look like a small country shop that sells "nearly everything." The counter is a convenient height for rabbits. The door into the street is on the spectator's left, and the shop window to the right of it. On the upper panes the legend "Ginger and Pickles" can be read reversed. Further down to the left is a door into the parlour. There is a bell on the street door, which jangles whenever the door is used. There are sugar boxes and biscuit boxes arranged about the stage.

When the curtain rises the stage is empty. Then the Flannel Policeman is seen, with measured tread, to pass the window. He is heard to knock. After a pause he pushes open the door. The bell jangles. Seeing that the shop is empty, he closes the door and passes on.

GINGER AND PICKLES

Ginger enters hurriedly from the parlour.

GINGER: Bless us! Nobody here? (*as she goes to window*) I do hope I have not lost a customer. Oh! It was that Flannel Policeman again!

A small object shoots past the window and into the shop with a jangle of bell. What at first seems to be a ball of wool resolves itself into a young rabbit.

S. RABBIT (*breathless*): Pennyworth of peppermints, please, miss.

GINGER: Humbugs?

S. RABBIT: Too big. Bull's eyes.

GINGER: I am sorry I am out of bull's eyes just now.

S. RABBIT: A ha'puth of Spanish then.

GINGER (*holding up a long piece of liquorice which looks like a bootlace*): There you are, my dear. (*She holds out her paw for the half-penny*).

S. RABBIT: Mother says—will you please—(*recalling the phrase*). “Book” it. (*The rabbit shoots out and nearly collides with Pickles who has just come to the door. The rabbit gives a little squeal and vanishes.*)

PICKLES : Hullo, Ginger.

GINGER (*vexed about the half-penny*) : Oh, Pickles, where *have* you been ?

PICKLES (*mysteriously*) : Ah! You know I always feel so proud when I see our two names over the shop. "Ginger and Pickles!" They look so smart. So brisk like.

GINGER : Brisk indeed! I wish our business were brisk.

PICKLES : Well, no one can say we don't try hard. Look at the agreeable things we sell. These red spotty handkerchiefs at a penny-three-farthings, how attractive! Sugar—and snuff—and goloshes!

GINGER (*who has been dusting jars in the window*) : There's Mrs. Benjamin Bunny. I wonder if she's coming here ?

PICKLES : If she does *you* had better serve her. She doesn't seem to care for me.

GINGER : She is afraid of you. I do think you might make yourself a little more agreeable to her.

PICKLES : Come now, Mrs. Anna Maria and her family are not particularly fond of *you*!

GINGER : I cannot bear to see those mice going out at the door carrying their little parcels. It makes my mouth water.

PICKLES : But it would never do to eat our own customers. They would leave us and go to Tabitha Twitchit's shop.

GINGER (*gloomily*): On the contrary, they would go nowhere.

Mrs. Benjamin Bunny enters.

MRS. B. B.: Good afternoon. (*She edges away from Pickles, who growls pianissimo.*)
I want a pair of bootlaces, please.

GINGER: Let me see . . . bootlaces? Did not some come in the other day, Pickles?

PICKLES (*growling*): No, they did not.

GINGER (*picking up two pieces of Spanish liquorice*):
Oh, here are some.

MRS. B. B.: I know the difference between bootlaces and liquorice. That's liquorice.

GINGER: Dear me, how foolish of me. Of course, that's liquorice. Here, ma'am, is a new line in buttons . . .

MRS. B. B.: I thank you. Buttons are not being worn now, I am told. I will take some hairpins instead.

GINGER: Hairpins? Certainly, ma'am. (*Ginger searches box after box desperately.*) Very pleasant weather we are having, are we not?

MRS. B. B.: Very seasonable for the time of year, I am sure.

GINGER (*with an ingenious smile*): No—I am sorry, ma'am. A customer bought my last packet of hairpins only a few minutes ago.

Pickles growls derisively.

MRS. B. B. : Oh, how annoying. I wanted some hairpins most particularly (*ticking off a list of goods*). Now I want a cabbage, please.

GINGER (*startled*) : A cabbage ?

MRS. B. B. : Yes, a cabbage.

GINGER (*firmly*) : Oh, no, ma'am. We have no cabbages. There is no demand for cabbages now.

MRS. B. B. : You do not appear to have anything that I want.

PICKLES (*growling*) : We have everything that the *Quality* ask for !

MRS. B. B. (*safely at the door*) : Except, it would seem, just the things one wants in a hurry ! In future I shall do my shopping at Tabitha Twitchit's. (*She slams the door after her as she goes. The bell jangles.*)

PICKLES : Oh, how I dislike that rabbit !

GINGER : Going to Tabitha Twitchit, is she ? Well, she will get no credit there. Tabitha Twitchit never gives credit.

PICKLES : What is " giving credit " ?

GINGER : Pickles ! You ignoramus !

PICKLES : Well, we all have our weaknesses.

GINGER : As if I have not explained that to you a dozen times. " Giving credit " is what we are doing all the time.

PICKLES : You mean that when Mrs. Anna Maria buys a bar of soap, instead of pulling out a purse and paying for it, she says she will pay another time ?

GINGER : Precisely ; and you make a low bow and say, " With pleasure, madam."

PICKLES (*brightly*) : And write it down in the book.

GINGER : Precisely.

PICKLES : And customers come in crowds and buy quantities—especially toffee . . .

GINGER : *Precisely*. And no one pays—not even for a pennyworth of peppermints.

PICKLES : And the sales are enormous—ten times as large as Tabitha Twitchit's . . .

GINGER : *BUT* . . . there is no money in the till.

PICKLES : I beg your pardon ?

GINGER : *There is no money in the till!*

PICKLES : That is very awkward.

GINGER : It is. As we have no money, we cannot buy food. And as we cannot buy food, we have to eat our own goods.

PICKLES : Well, I must say the cream crackers are very tasty.

(There is a pause in which Ginger forgets the economic crisis for a moment.)

GINGER : I prefer dried haddock, myself.

The bell jangles as Anna Maria enters. Ginger spits and places herself behind some boxes.

ANNA M. : Good afternoon, Mr. Pickles. I trust I see you well ?

PICKLES : Nicely, ma'am. I thank you. What can I do for you this afternoon ?

ANNA M. (*she produces a bent candle covered in grease*) : I have come about your candles. Look at this one, Mr. Pickles.

PICKLES (*holding it up*) : Let me see. This is a self-fitting six . . .

ANNA M. : Yes, but your candles behave very strangely in the warm weather.

PICKLES : Tut, tut. This will never do.

(As he turns to find a new candle, Anna Maria slips her paw into the cream cracker biscuit box. Ginger mews. Anna Maria gives a little scream as her paw comes out full of cream crackers.)

GINGER : There are no candles in that box, ma'am.

ANNA M. : Oh, how stupid of me. Of course these are biscuits. (*She puts them back.*)

PICKLES (*wrapping up a new candle*) : There you are, ma'am.

GINGER : In future, Mrs. Anna Maria, we shall not be able to take back candles in *that* condition.

ANNA M. : What do you mean ?

GINGER : That's not a candle, ma'am—that is a candle *end*.

PICKLES (*to Ginger under his breath*) : You might be a little more respectful to the lady.

For answer Ginger spits catwise.

ANNA M. (*who has been gathering up her belongings*) : Well, I've no doubt I shall get what I require at Tabitha Twitchit's shop. She is always *most* obliging. (*She flounces out.*)

GINGER : Tabitha Twitchit! Always Tabitha Twitchit!

PICKLES : Never mind, Ginger-puss, things will come right in the end.

GINGER : I hope they may.

Clock strikes six.

PICKLES : Six o'clock. Let's have supper and then you will feel better.

GINGER : First shut up the shop. Whatever happens we must not let people know that we are eating our stock.

Pickles goes out and puts up the shutters. Ginger lights a candle and pulls forward a small table and lays it. Pickles dashes in and slams the door.

GINGER : What is the matter ?

PICKLES : That Flannel Policeman again. Why does he haunt this place ?

GINGER : I saw him just before you came back this afternoon.

PICKLES : No!

GINGER (*nods*) : Where *had* you been ?

PICKLES : To the Post Office.

GINGER : Whatever for ?

PICKLES : Have you forgotten the date ?

GINGER : Of course not. It is Jan. Second.

PICKLES (*ominously*) : Yes, and yesterday was Jan. First.

GINGER : Oh, your dog licence is due.

PICKLES : Yes, and I have no money to buy it with. It is most uncomfortable.

GINGER : It is your own fault for being a dog. I do not require a licence.

PICKLES : I tried to get the Post Office man to give me one on what you call "credit." He was most uncivil. It is all very unpleasant. I am afraid I shall be summoned. The place is full of policemen. I met one as I was coming home, and now here this Flannel one parading up and down outside our shop, just as if the King and Queen lived here!

GINGER : Let's send in all the bills again. (*She gets the books, pen, ink, paper.*) Anna Maria's husband owes twenty-two-and-ninepence for bacon. Their account is long overdue.

PICKLES : I don't believe they intend to pay at all.

GINGER : And I am sure Anna Maria pockets things. Just now I saw her hand in the cream crackers . . .

PICKLES (*indignant*) : My cream crackers ?

GINGER : Let's do the accounts.

PICKLES (*groaning*) : Oh, sums, and sums, and sums.

GINGER : Samuel Whiskers has run up a bill as long as his tale. He has had an ounce and three-quarters of snuff since October.

PICKLES (*desperately*) : What is seven pounds of butter at one-and-three, and a stick of sealing wax and four matches ?

GINGER (*muttering rapidly*) : Seven pounds at one-and-three—Eight-and-ninepence. Wax, tuppence farthing. Four matches at a farthing—(*aloud*) eight and elevenpence three farthings.

PICKLES : Oh, how quick you are !

GINGER : I am putting " With Compts." on the small bills, but on the overdue ones I am putting something much worse.

PICKLES : If only everybody would pay us what they owe we should have plenty of money.
*There is a loud knock on the front door.
Ginger and Pickles look at each other.*

PICKLES (*in a whisper*) : The Flannel Policeman !

GINGER : Into the back parlour. Quick! (*They vanish*).

The door slowly opens and the Flannel Policeman enters. He puts a large blue envelope on the counter, then takes out his pocket book and pencil. While writing he puts the pencil in his mouth and then into the treacle jar. This he repeats as he likes it.

Pickles barks from the parlour. The Flannel Policeman starts guiltily.

GINGER (*from the parlour*) : Bite him, Pickles, bite him!

Pickles rushes on barking and retreating. The Flannel Policeman dodges for a little and then runs out. Pickles slams the door after him.

PICKLES : It is all right Ginger, he's gone.

GINGER (*who has re-entered and picked up the blue envelope*) : Yes, but *this* remains.

PICKLES : It is a summons.

GINGER (*putting it down as if it were hot*) : A summons! Oh!

PICKLES : This is the last straw. Let's run away.

GINGER : We had better take some food.

They hurriedly fill their pockets with biscuits and sweets.

PICKLES : It will give us time to think of a plan.

GINGER : We had better pop these "accounts rendered" into the pillar-box as we pass. I could slip back some time to see if there are any answers.

PICKLES : There won't be any answers. Don't forget your haddock.

Ginger wraps the haddock in a piece of paper. Pickles blows out candle, and they go out. The bell jangles on the dark empty stage.

The curtain falls and rises to denote passage of time to the following day.

The door opens and Anna Maria pokes her head in.

ANNA M. : Nobody here? Shutters still up. Very odd!

She comes in followed by Mrs. Benjamin Bunny.

MRS. B. B. : I expect poor Ginger is in bed. I have no doubt that wicked Pickles overworks her.

ANNA M. : On the contrary. It is Pickles who does the work.

MRS. B. B. : Ginger always keeps the place tidy.

ANNA M. : Well, look at all these letters on the floor.

MRS. B. B. (*picking them up*) : This is the morning's post. You must have scattered them as you came in.

ANNA M. (*nosing about*): Dear me, the cream cracker box is empty.

MRS. B. B.: Benjamin was saying to me only this morning at breakfast—"My dear," he said, "here is the account from Ginger and Pickles. I do think we ought to pay it . . . such an agreeable shop, if only that Mr. Pickles would retire . . ."

ANNA M.: What is this?

MRS. B. B. (*coming out of her reverie*): What is what?

ANNA M.: This large blue envelope addressed to Mr. Pickles?

MRS. B. B.: It looks rather official.

ANNA M. (*smelling it*): I wonder?

MRS. B. B. (*tentatively*): Did you have an account rendered from Ginger and Pickles this morning, "With Compts."?

ANNA M.: Yes, I did. But mine said more than "With Compts." (*She hands letter to Mrs. B. B.*) Read it!

MRS. B. B. (*reading*): "Account considerably overdue . . . must ask for remittance in the course of the next few days . . . Ginger and Pickles."

ANNA M.: Not very agreeable, is it?

MRS. B.: Aren't you going to pay?

ANNA M.: I might if it were not for Ginger.

MRS. B. B. : Come now, Ginger is not as bad as all that. I find her most obliging.

A knock at the door. Enter the Flannel Policeman.

FL. POL. : Good morning, ladies. I have called to see Pickles about a little matter. (*He coughs apologetically*).

ANNA M. (*picking up the blue envelope*) : About this, I suppose.

FL. POL. : Yes, ma'am. It is a summons in default of his paying his dog licence.

MRS. B. B. (*giggles*) : Fancy!

ANNA M. : I see nothing to laugh at, Mrs. Bunny. Poor fellow.

FL. POL. : Nor will he, ma'am, I do assure you.

ANNA M. : Oh, that's quite all right. I know all about this. He asked me—that is, he wants me to settle the matter for him. He's rather busy this morning.

MRS. B. B. : Mrs. Anna Maria!

ANNA M. (*smiling at the Flannel Policeman*) : Shall I open it?

FL. POL. : Well, it bain't exactly addressed to you, ma'am.

ANNA M. : No. That is true. But Mr. Pickles must have meant me to see it. Look, you can see where he put his paw to open the envelope—oh, there now—my finger has slipped—it is open!

FL. POL. : A most hun-hanticipated accident, ma'am! (*Takes out pocket book*) I must report this at head-quarters.

ANNA M. (*as she reads the summons*) : Oh, no, dear Mr. Flannel Policeman, that's not at all necessary. (*She takes money out of her reticule*) Here is the money. Now that is settled. Mr. Pickles will call for the licence later.

FL. POL. (*awed*) : Very well, ma'am.

MRS. B. B. : That is rather obliging of you, Anna Maria, and I think . . . (*she takes out her purse*).

Enter Ginger and Pickles. Pickles comes first, and his run ends in a slide as he sees the company.

PICKLES : Oh, crums!

GINGER (*at once rising to the situation*) : Good morning, everyone. How nice to see the shop so full!

FL. POL. : I came, ma'am, to see Mr. Pickles.

PICKLES (*under his breath*) : I told you it was mad to come back for those answers.

GINGER : Be quiet. Leave all to me.

FL. POL. : You see, ma'am, it was this way . . .

GINGER : Oh, please, sit down everybody.

FL. POL. : It's like this, ma'am . . .

GINGER : Do have a humbug, Mr. Flannel Policeman. (*She slips one into his mouth. He becomes inarticulate.*)

MRS. B. B. : Here, my dear, is the money to settle our account. Rather a big one, I'm afraid. And my husband wished me to give a pound or two on deposit, as it were, towards the next account. He was only saying at breakfast this morning, "Ginger is such a good manager."

GINGER : Oh, Mrs. Benjamin Bunny.

ANNA M. (*to Pickles*) : And I have paid for the dog licence. You can take the amount off my bill.

PICKLES : What a relief !

MRS. B. B. : By the way, we found these letters on the floor.

FL. POL. (*trying to talk*) : Bl-bl-bl—

ANNA M. : You run along to the Post Office and get that licence, there's a good man.

Flannel Policeman goes out smiling and burbling.

GINGER (*she has torn open the letters*) : Pickles, all these are from customers paying their bills!

PICKLES : Then we shall not have to close the shop after all.

(*He goes outside to open shop.*)

GINGER : Yes, that's right, take down the shutters.

MRS. B. B. : I am so glad, Ginger.

GINGER : Thank you, ma'am.

PICKLES (*coming in*): Walk up! Walk up! Great re-opening Sale! Great bargains!

ANNA M. (*losing her head*): Please order me a whole tin of cream crackers.

BOTH: What?

ANNA M. (*quickly*): I'll pay cash! (*She gets out her purse*).

Re-enter the Flannel Policeman.

FL. POL.: Here is your licence, sir.

PICKLES: I am much obliged. Have another humbug?

FL. POL.: Thank you kindly, sir, but, No!

PICKLES: The well-known, long established firm of Ginger . . .

GINGER: And Pickles . . .

BOTH: Will continue to wait upon the Gentry and Nobility!

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